ENGLISH HERITAGE

24 OCT 2008

Medway Council
FAO The Chief Executive
Gun Wharf
Dock Road
Chatham
Kent
ME4 4TR

Our Ref: 166443

Direct Line: 0207 973 3113
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21 October 2008

Dear Sir/Madam,

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest

Aveling & Porter Building, ESPLANADE, STROOD, ROCHESTER, MEDWAY, KENT

I am writing further to our previous correspondence about the application to list the above building.

The Secretary of State, after consulting English Heritage, the Government's statutory adviser, has decided not to add the Aveling and Porter Building, Esplanade, Strood to the list for the following principal reasons:

* Although built in 1903-4 as the office building to an iron foundry by a well-known local architect, George E Bond and of good quality materials, its design is rather old-fashioned for its date and the main elevations, particularly that to the river which is very prominent, are rather mechanical and repetitive;
* The building has a typical layout for late C19 and early C20 factory offices with board room and individual offices and has no particular significance for the evolution of this particular building type;
* Surviving features to the exterior and interior are typical and representative rather than of fine quality, and while the corner treatment is good, the river elevation is not as imaginative as it could have been;
* This building has local interest for its historic connections with the engineering firm, but only the office now survives and it has suffered contextually by the removal of the associated factory building where the streamrollers were manufactured, now surrounded by later C20 municipal offices.

It therefore is not of sufficient special architectural or historic interest to merit listing.

If you consider that the decision has been wrongly made you may write to the Department for

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Culture, Media and Sport within 28 days of the date of this letter to request that the Secretary of State review the decision. An example of a decision made wrongly would be where there was a factual error or an irregularity in the process which affected the outcome. You may also ask the Secretary of State to review the decision if you have any significant evidence relating to the special architectural or historic interest of the building which was not previously considered. Further details of the review criteria and process are contained in the annex to this letter.

I have enclosed a copy of our Adviser's Report for your information.

Yours sincerely

Michael German

Mr Mike German
Territory Co-ordinator, South
1 Waterhouse Square, 138-142 Holborn, London, EC1N 2ST

Data Protection Act 1998

The information you provide, including personal details, and any information obtained from other sources will be retained by English Heritage, in hard copy form and/or on computer for administrative purposes and future consideration, where applicable. English Heritage will not release personal information to a third party if its disclosure would contravene any of the data protection principles in the Data Protection Act 1998

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**Annex: Review Criteria and Process**

A review will only be carried out in the following circumstances:

(1) there is evidence that the original decision has been made wrongly. Examples would include:

- where there was a factual error, eg. the wrong building was listed; or
- where there has been some irregularity in the process which has affected the outcome, eg. relevant considerations were not taken into account or irrelevant considerations were taken into account.

(2) there is significant evidence which was not previously considered, relating to the special architectural or historic interest of the building, as set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. An example would be where new evidence relating to the date of a building has been discovered which might make a material difference to the architectural or historic interest of the building.

Having conducted a review, the Secretary of State will either affirm or overturn the original decision. It is important to understand that the original decision will stand until the Secretary of State has made a decision on whether the original decision should be affirmed or overturned. If the original decision is overturned, this will not have retrospective effect.

Review requests which are received after 28 days from the date of this letter may be considered in exceptional circumstances.

The address for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport is 2-4 Cockspur Street, London SW1Y 5DH.

English Heritage (Listing) **Adviser's Report** 21 OCT 2008

ADDRESS

Aveling & Porter Building, ESPLANADE, ROCHESTER

Parish ROCHESTER
District MEDWAY
County KENT

Case UID: 166443

Date First Listed:

Formerly Listed As:

RECOMMENDATION

Adviser: Mrs C Ryan

Outcome: No, do not list Recommended Grade: NL 21-AUG-2008

Advice Text: After examining all the papers on this file and other relevant information and having carefully considered the architectural and historic interest of this case, the criteria for listing are not fulfilled.

CONTEXT

We have been asked to assess the Aveling and Porter Building, Esplanade, Strood for statutory listing. The building, latterly used as offices as part of a civic centre has been vacated and the existing building, together with adjoining sites, is likely soon to be the subject of residential re-development proposals.

The building is situated along the Esplanade beside the River Medway and adjoins Rochester Bridge, listed Grade II.

HISTORY

The 1896 Ordnance Survey map shows a corner public house, called the Ship Inn and three other small scale properties on the site. To the west is shown a large industrial complex of iron foundries. The current building, built in 1903-4 as offices for Messrs Aveling and Porter by George E Bond, replaced most of these smaller scale existing buildings along the Esplanade.

The firm of Aveling and Porter was the biggest industry in the city at the time and manufactured 'Invicta' road rollers and other heavy machinery. The business was founded by Thomas Aveling (1824-1882) who developed a self moving steam engine for use both on the farm and the road which resulted in his being known as the father of the traction engine. He was also the first to develop the steamroller into a practical machine. Aveling was Mayor of Rochester in 1869-71 and a member of the Council of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, a member of the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Institution of Mechanical Engineers and the Iron and Steel Institute. Control of the firm was handed over to his son Thomas Lake Aveling (1856-1931) in 1881 until his retirement in 1928. Under his direction the firm concentrated on the production of steamrollers and the firm met about 70% of the British market for road rollers in the early C20, together with traction engines, ploughing machines, steam waggons and tramway locomotives. At the firm's peak there were about 1500 employees. In 1932 the offices became the offices of Messrs Winget, concrete mixer manufacturers when Aveling and Porter merged and relocated to Grantham, Lincs. In 1974 the building became part of the Civic Centre, together with adjoining purpose built offices to the north. In the late C20 further office buildings were linked to it at the south-western end which also incorporated a formerly separate mid-C19 yellow brick villa.

George E Bond (1853-1914) was a prolific architect who practiced in the Medway area for the last three decades of the C19. Typical of his work are rusticated stone courses, red brick and rubbed brick arches, bay windows within an overall arch, details in pink concrete, terracotta panels and a fondness for turrets and gables. Significant commissions include Chatham's Town Hall, The Old Theatre Royal, Chatham and St. Ronan's, a house built for his own occupation, all of 1899, and the offices of the Medway Conservancy Board of 1909, all listed Grade II.

DESCRIPTION
This is a corner building, also with a long river frontage, constructed mainly of red brick in English bond with Bath stone dressings, terracotta modillion cornice, band between floors and keystones and coursed and squared Kentish ragstone plinth. The rear elevation is plainer, of yellow brick in Flemish bond with red brick dressings. There is a tiled roof with a metal ventilator towards the south-west end and several late C20 glazed rooflights have been inserted. The building is of two storeys and attics with main entrance bay in the western corner, the main range of 15 bays to the south-west with a smaller section of four bays to the north east. Windows are mainly plain cambered sashes with vertical glazing bars to the upper parts and horns.

The principal feature of the building is the splayed corner entrance which has a Dutch gable with octagonal corner turrets, first floor oriel window of three lights and round-headed main entrance with keystone, moulded columns and wrought iron scrolled double doors in front of a vestibule. This has a lantern to the ceiling and revolving doors. To the north-east is a single bay followed to the north-west by a projecting Dutch gable with one window to the attic storey and three below. A metal plaque of March 11th 1982, formerly fixed to the wall adjoining the entrance and commemorating Thomas Aveling, had been removed at the time of inspection and put in storage. To the south west is a single bay followed by a projecting Dutch gable identical to the one on the north-west side. This pattern is repeated once more and is followed by six bays without gables to the south-western end. The south-western end terminates in a gable end, now partially obscured by a late C20 building. The north-western end is now concealed behind the 1970s civic centre building. The rear or north-western side has two projecting gables with oculi to the north and a large original cast iron fire escape and set back section to the south of four bays. The windows are plain cambered sash windows with red brick cambered heads.

Access was originally through the corner splayed entrance directly into a staircase hall. The main staircase has a well and wooden handrail but cast iron balusters and elaborate column newel post. Above is a bracket cornice below a glazed skylight. A stained glass window depicting the history of Rochester was inserted during the building's use as part of the Civic Centre as it is dated 1993 with the initials 'J H'. The stained glass oculus below the stairs is original. On the ground floor the rooms at the north-eastern end retain original cornices and doors but the south-west end is now a conference room and was completely refitted in the late C20. There is access at each end into the adjoining late C20 offices. The first floor retains a series of small offices with original cornices and five-panelled wooden doors, the top panels with incised patterned glass. To the south is a former board room later partitioned into two rooms. This has a coved ribbed ceiling with dentil cornice, elaborate wide oak double six-panelled doors with bolection-moulded cornice and dado-panelling with bracketed fireplace surround. The dado-panelling to the north-western wall has been re-positioned on the later partition wall. The attic storey has been adapted to form open plan offices with the original principal rafters and collar beams visible.

ASSESSMENT
The principles of selection for post 1840 commercial buildings include: architectural quality; the significance for the evolution of the particular building type; surviving features (both decorative and

functional) and rarity.

The former Aveling and Porter Building, Strood was a purpose-built office building of 1903-4 added to existing iron foundry buildings. The firm was a major employer in the area and produced the majority of steamrollers in Britain in the early C20. The architect, George E Bond, was a respected local architect with several buildings listed Grade II, and his design is therefore of strong local interest. The office is built of good quality materials, the principal feature being the corner entrance bay, which marks a prominent site on the approach to the Medway towns, with a clear prospect to Rochester Cathedral, and it is seen clearly from the railway bridge over the River Medway. The other elevations are plainer, which is understandable to the rear, which originally faced the iron foundry, but it is disappointing along the long riverside elevation, which could have been a more thoughtfully designed frontage, given its prominence. This is a competently executed building, but overall is is much less elaborate and decorated than other examples of Bond's work which have been listed. The style is rather old-fashioned for its date and the treatment of the main elevations somewhat mechanical and repetitive. Surviving features include externally the decorative entrance bay and internally the main well staircase with cast iron balusters, doors with incised glass panels and a former Board Room with oak panelling and coved ribbed plaster ceiling now divided into offices. These features are typical and representative of their date rather than of fine quality. There are some cases where a building that does not have immediately obvious architectural interest is recommended for listing when it is a surviving part of a nationally important enterprise, such as the Spode factory in Stoke. However, while Aveling and Porter were clearly a significant engineering firm, we cannot make a claim for this building having special interest for this association and there does not seem to be a specific reference to their traction engine being developed in this building, for example.

The building's layout is typical of late C19 and early C20 factory offices with Board Room, individual offices for prominent members of the firm and perhaps a larger ground floor area for clerks. The office, therefore, has no particular significance in the evolution of this building type and furthermore it is is now only a partially complete site, given that all the workshops and manufacturing ranges have been lost. The surviving office range bears some witness to the work that went on here to develop the steam roller, but much of the works is now gone, and there is not a strong and specific historic claim for these offices that can be made. Factory offices of the early C20 are not a particularly rare building type and this example has suffered contextually from the loss of the adjoining iron foundry where the steamrollers were actually manufactured and has been surrounded by later C20 municipal offices. While it sits within a wider historic context of considerable note, there are no listed buildings directly associated with the office building itself.

SOURCES
Dictionary of National Biography entry for Thomas Aveling and Thomas Lake Aveling.
Pat Salter and Bob Ratcliffe article from "Clock Tower" magazine of the Friends of Medway Archives on G E Bond.

Conclusion: The Aveling and Porter building, Strood has strong local interest as the last remaining building of a once prominent local industry, but it does not meet the statutory listing criteria.

Reasons For Designation Decision:

The Aveling and Porter Building, Esplanade, Strood is not recommended for statutory listing for the following principal reasons:

* Although built in 1903-4 as the office building to an iron foundry by a well-known local architect, George E Bond and of good quality materials its design, its design is rather old-

fashioned for its date and the main elevations, particularly that to the river which is very prominent, are rather mechanical and repetitive;
* The building has a typical layout for late C19 and early C20 factory offices with board room and individual offices and has no particular significance for the evolution of this particular building type;
* Surviving features to the exterior and interior are typical and representative rather than of fine quality, and while the corner treatment is good, the river elevation is not as imaginative as it could have been;
* This building has local interest for its historic connections with the engineering firm, but only the office now survives and it has suffered contextually by the removal of the associated factory building where the streamrollers were manufactured, now surrounded by later C20 municipal offices.

## VISITS

30-JUL-2008 Internal

## COUNTERSIGNING

First Countersigning Adviser: Ms E Gee

Comments: Agreed. This is a well-known building by a good Rochester architect that holds a key site along the River Medway looking to the City of Rochester, and it represents the remaining part of a firm that played an important role in the development of the traction engine--for these reasons it is a significant building in the area; however, only the office of this engineering enterprise remains, and while this employs Kentish Rag dressings and has a nice corner treatment, it is lacking in special architectural interest, particularly along the riverfront where we would expect it to be more imaginatively designed. We are not, therefore, recommending listing, while acknowleging its strong local interest. 29-SEP-2008

Second Countersigning Adviser:

Comments:

HP Director:

Comments: